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# PALESTINE EXPLORATION, WHAT REMAINS TO BE DONE.

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The survey of Western Palestine, from the sea to the Jordan, and from Dan to Beersheba, has been so thoroughly accomplished by the officers of the Palestine Exploration Fund of Great Britain, that nothing more remains to be done in that section so far as the surface is concerned. The results of this work are fully exhibited in their immense map of this section, and the seven quarto volumes which accompany it. The map is by far the largest ever made of Palestine, being drawn on a scale of one inch to the square mile, and it is the only one prepared from such information as could make perfection a possibility. The South Country, which lies between the southern border of Palestine proper and the desert, and which was at one time occupied by Israelites, should be surveyed and added to the map, and then the surface work west of the Jordan and the Dead Sea would be completed.

East of the Jordan but little has been done in the way of mathematical survey, and no map approaching strict accuracy has ever been made. If the reader will compare any two maps not copied one from the other, he will see, by their differences, how unreliable they are. Soon after the close of the war in the Soudan, Capt. Conder, who had been called into active service during the war, was sent back to Palestine to complete the survey work of the Exploration Fund by surveying beyond the Jordan, but he had scarcely begun the work when the Turkish government stupidly ordered its discontinuance. There is no doubt that this organization will renew and finish the undertaking as soon as the governmental opposition can be overcome. Probably the best way to overcome it would be by the total overthrow of the opposing government, and this is liable to occur as the result of the great eastern war which is imminent.

But after the surface of the country shall have been accurately surveyed and exhibited on maps, our knowledge of many interesting questions will still be incomplete, until we shall have gone down beneath the surface, and brought up the records which may lie buried in Palestine, as we have brought some of those buried in Assyria, Babylonia and Egypt. It is highly probable that among these are to be found the most valuable relics of antiquity. The whole civilized world has been thrilled of late by the account of unwrapping the mummy of Rameses II., the pharaoh who first persecuted Israel, and by the description of his person which has gone abroad into the newspapers of every land. When the world gazes upon his photograph, taken 3500 years after his death, it will be hard for any one to doubt the account of him which is given in the Bible. But what is this discovery compared with unwrapping the mummies of Jacob and his son Joseph, and actually laying hands upon their foreheads, looking into their sightless eyes, and sending their photographs around the world? This is not beyond the bounds of possibility; for Jacob's body, embalmed like the body of a king, was laid away in the rock sepulchre of Machpelah, and there it lies yet, unless it was removed at

an early day. The spot has been guarded by stone walls and a jealous people for many generations past, and it is still so closely guarded that no human being is allowed to enter the sepulchre. An hour's work might perhaps be enough to determine whether the patriarch still lies where he was placed by his sons and the elders of Egypt. Joseph, too, was embalmed, and after being kept in Egypt in a coffin, doubtless of granite, until Israel was delivered, he was buried in the piece of land which his father bought near Shechem. His tomb is there to this day, and a few hours' work with pick and spade would tell us whether his mummy is yet there. These are burning questions, and to be kept in suspense about them, when, but for Mohammedan superstition, they could be so easily settled, is quite annoying.

There is another question quite similar in the interest attaching to its investigation and the ease with which it could be investigated, to the two just mentioned. It is the question concerning the nature and design of the sacred rock under the Dome of the Rock, and of the well which descends from the cavern beneath it into the heart of the temple mount. No one who has ever entered that sanctuary, gazed upon the unshapen mass of dusty limestone which is covered by the costly structure, entered the artificial cavern beneath it, and stamped his heel on the circular marble slab covering the well's mouth, and heard the deep reverberations below, can be content to let that slab remain unlifted, as the Mohammedans say it must, until the day of judgment. We wish to lift it at once. We wish to descend the well, see to what it leads, and make it reveal the purpose of its own existence and that of the rock above it. We wish to make it give up its treasures of ancient history; and should we find in some of its dark recesses, as the Jews believe we would, the ark of the covenant, we would value it above its bulk in solid gold. Nothing stands in the way of the search except the unreasoning superstition of the Mohammedans, who will not go in themselves, and who hinder those who would.

But besides these places of special interest and easy access, there are hundreds of others in Palestine where judicious excavations might determine important questions of topography, bring to light historical inscriptions on stone, and add largely to the evidence of the accuracy of the sacred narratives. Almost every ruined town and village shows, cropping above the surface, the upper courses of buried masonry, which, if disinterred, might tell an interesting story of the ruined city on which the modern village is built. The same is true of Jerusalem itself, concerning which many questions remain unsettled which can be settled only by investigation beneath the surface. Doubtless the Palestine Exploration Fund of Great Britain, which has done so much already in the line for which it was organized, will continue its operations; but it should not be left to do the work alone. Some organization in America should be effected to share in the expense, the labor, and the honor connected with the investigation. The co-operative organization which we once had, and which commenced a work beyond the Jordan that was full of promise, has long ago lapsed into inactivity and perhaps into dissolution. Why not revive it?